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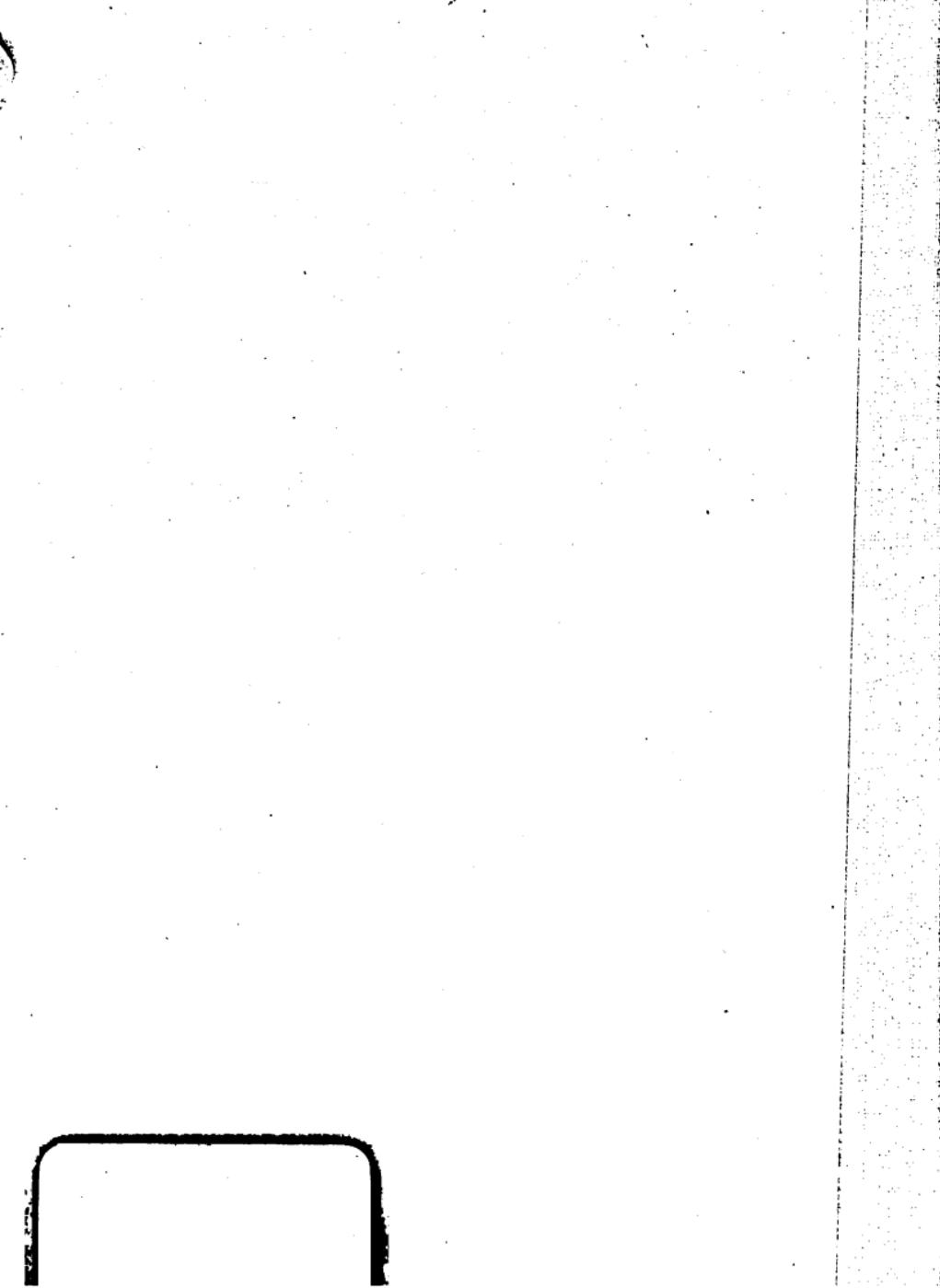
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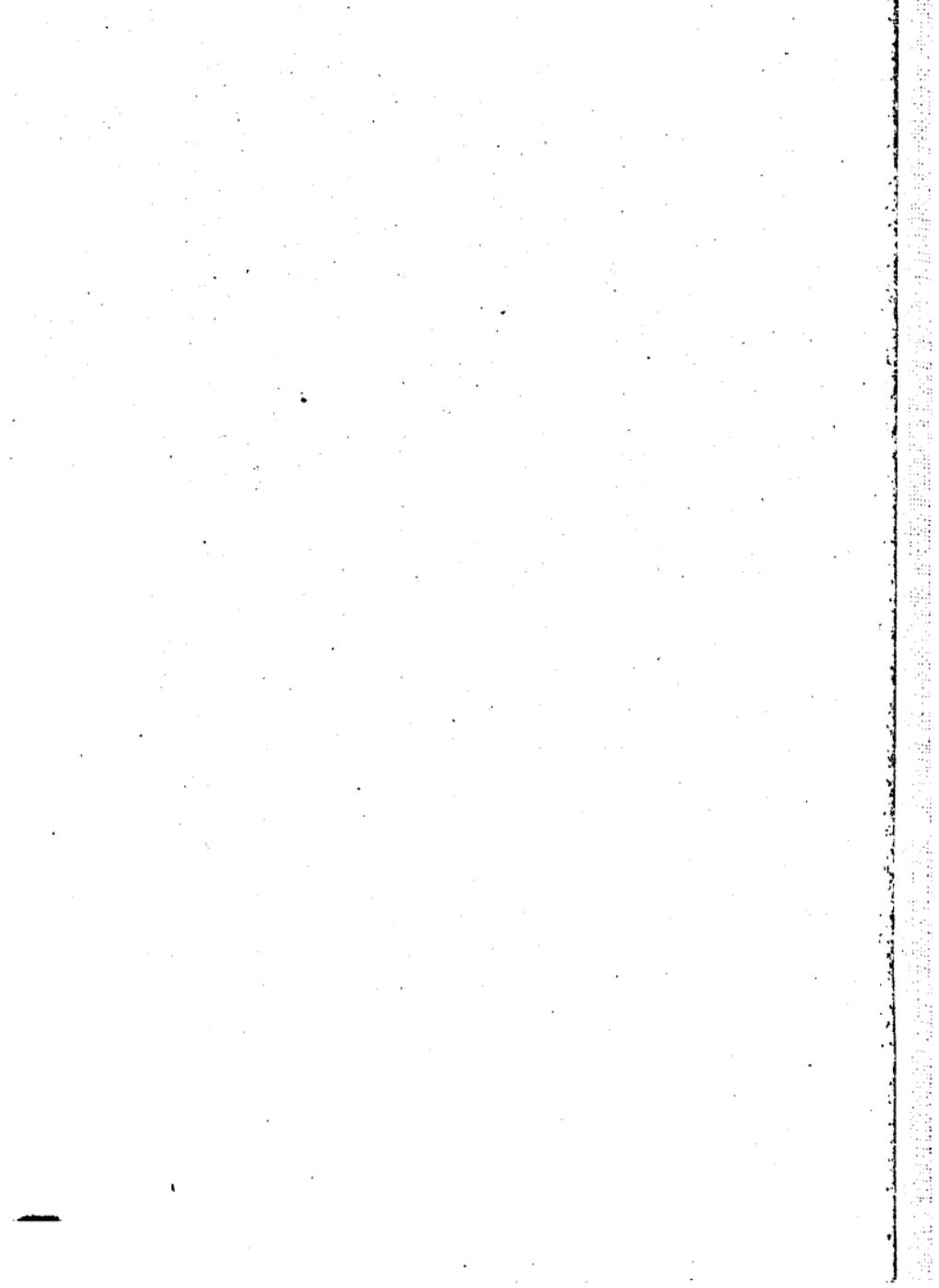
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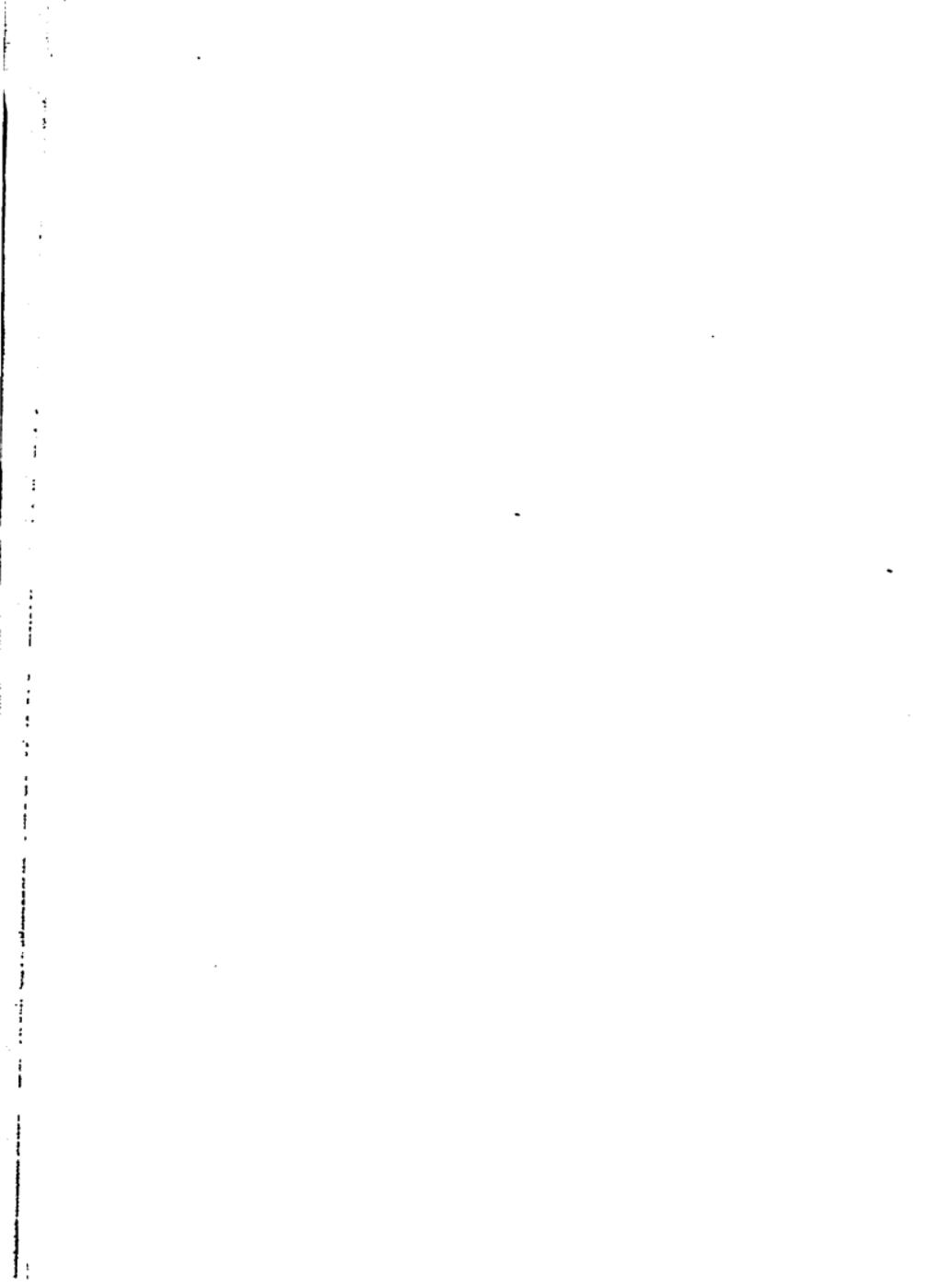
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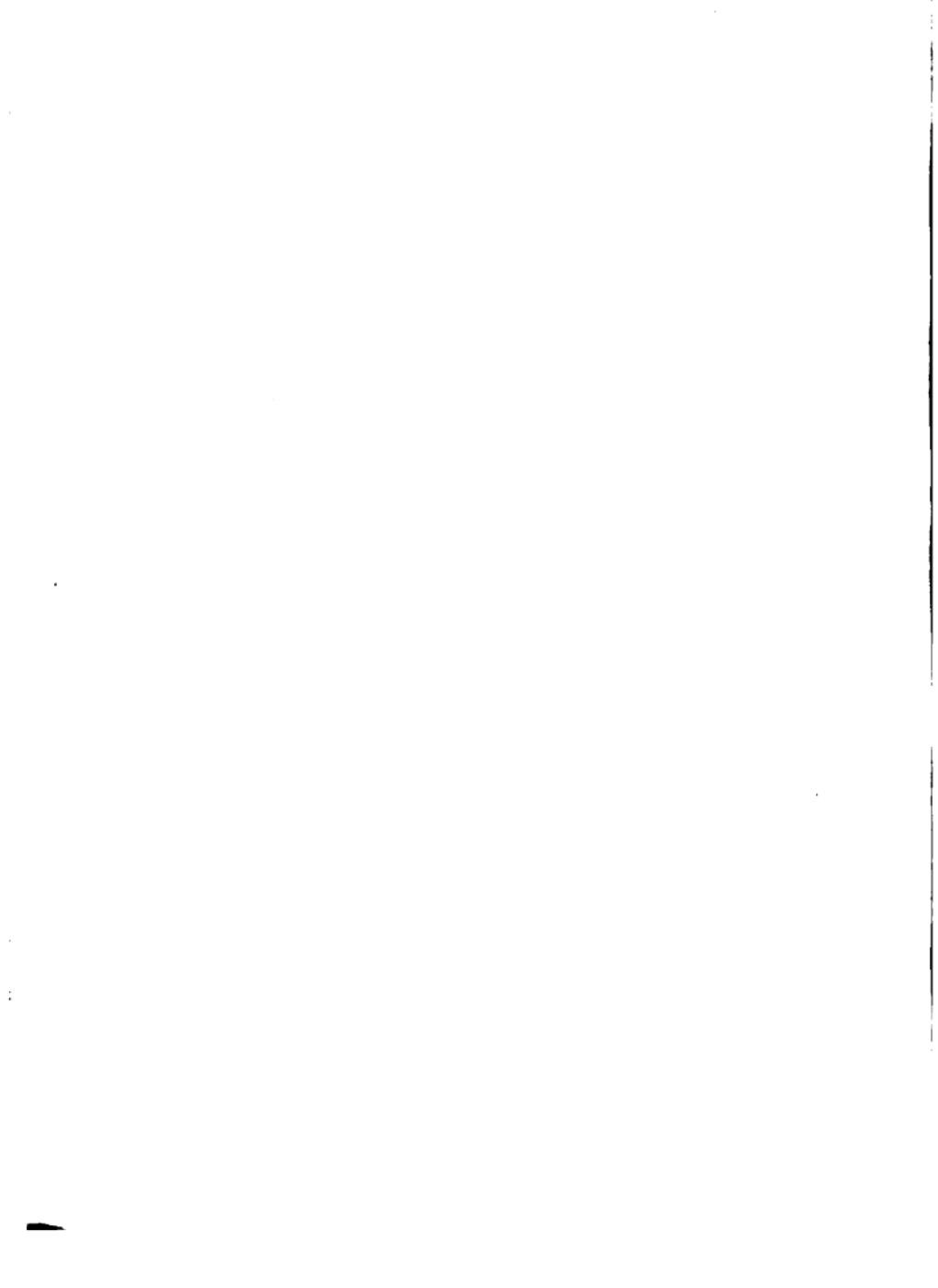
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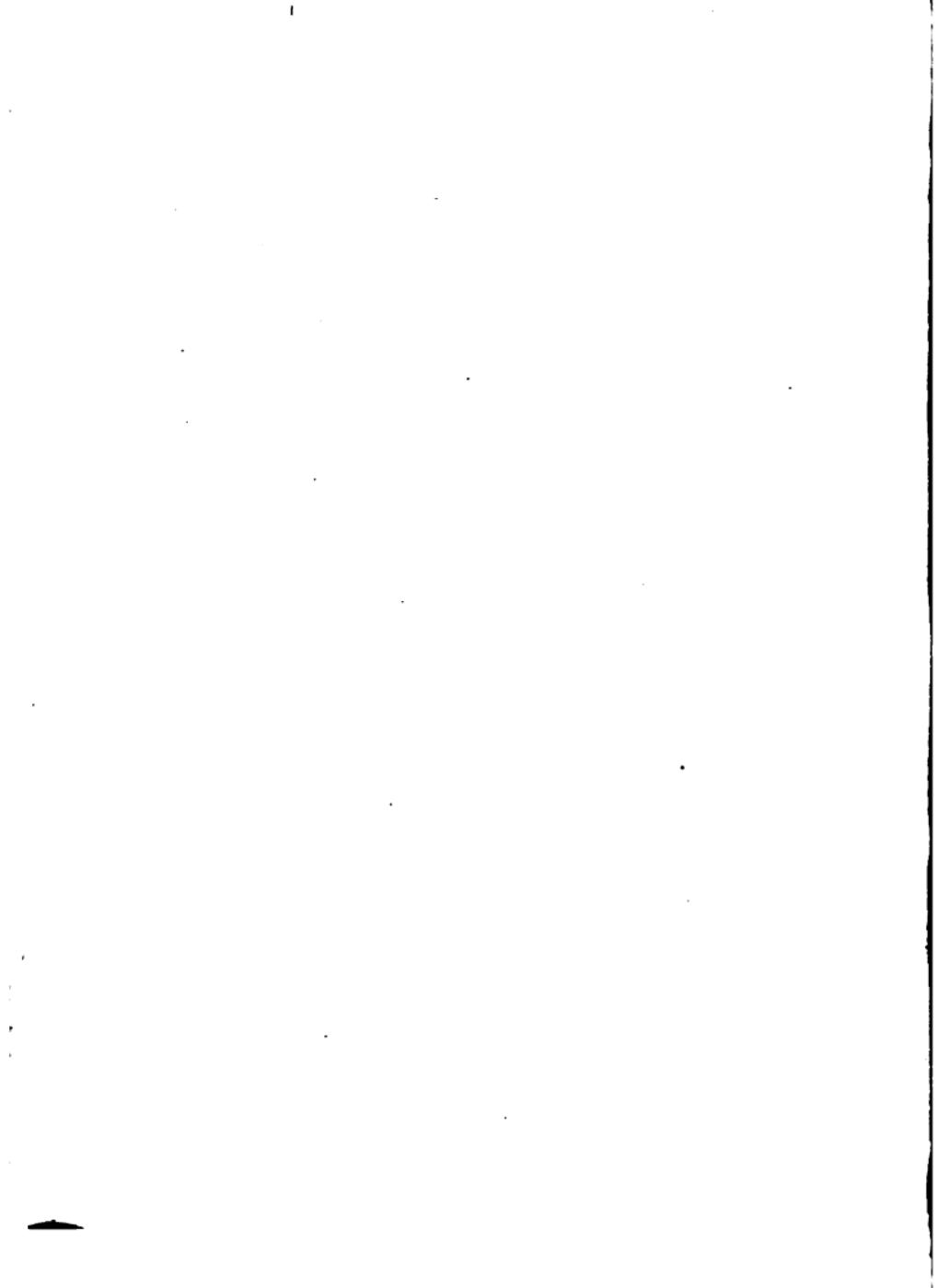






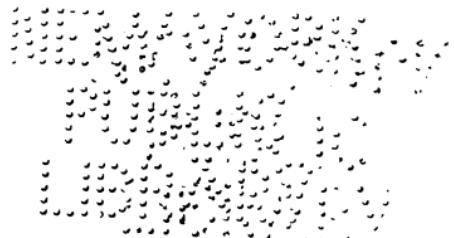
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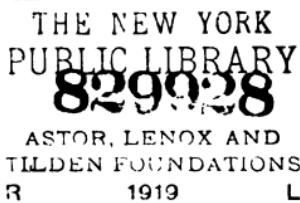
The Singing Flame

By Harold Hersey



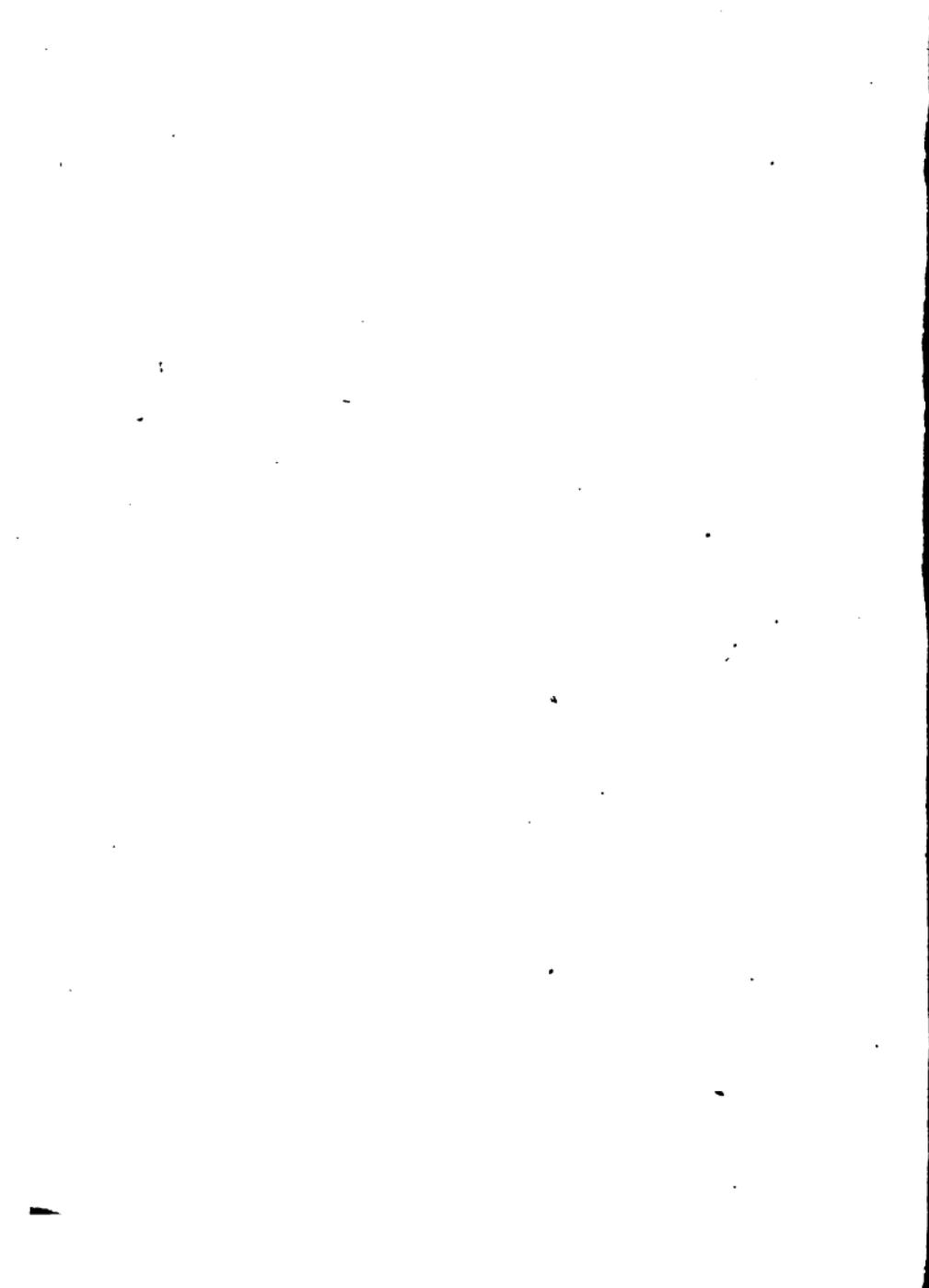
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To
H. L. MENCKEN



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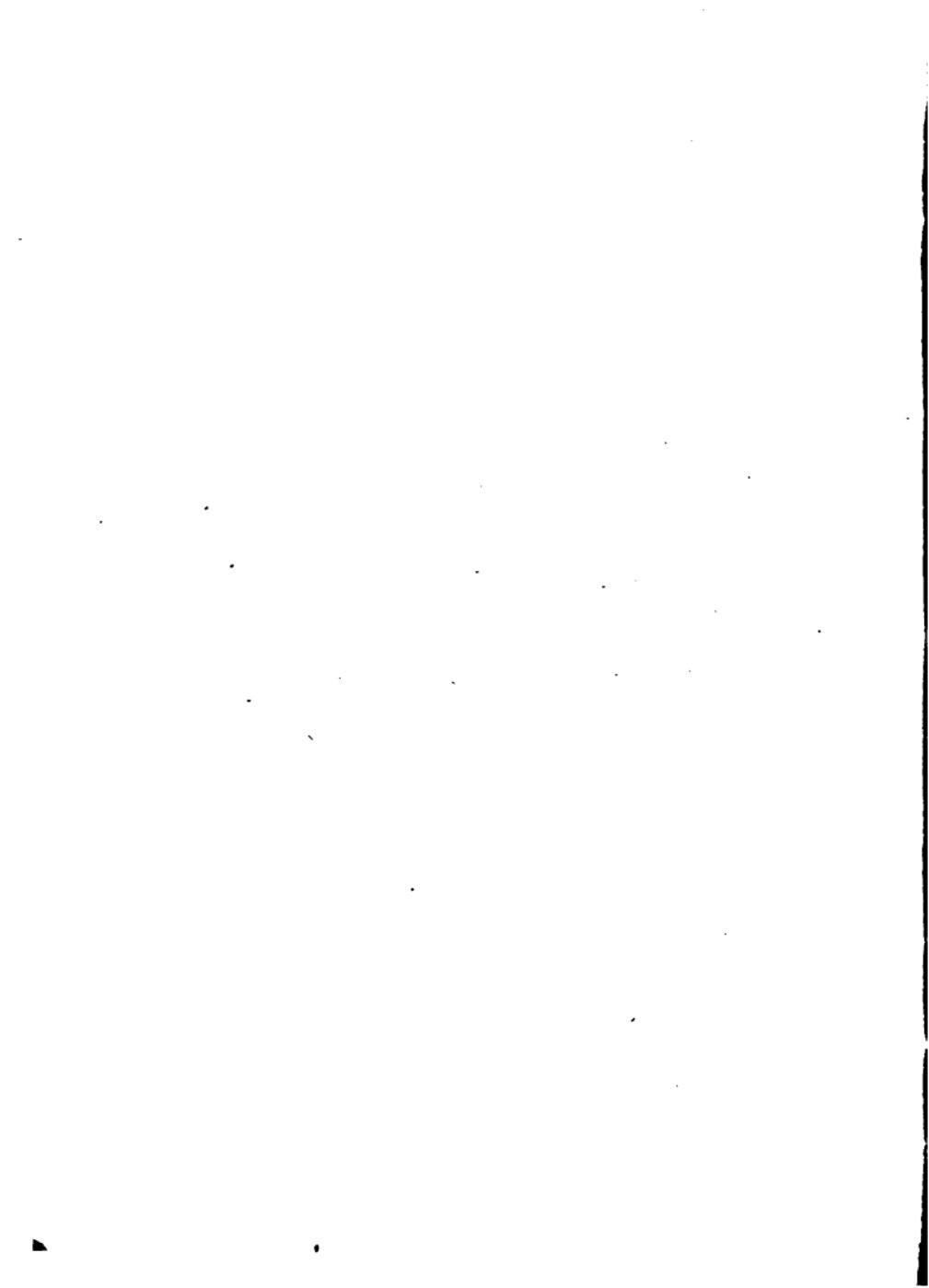
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NOCTURNE

I.

There by the window is his chair,
His absence seems to fill the room,
The odor of flowers scents the air
With their withered bloom.

On a peg in the closet hang his clothes,
In a corner stands his ugly crutch,
The family Bible presses a rose
She dares not touch.

And as the twilight hour nears
She does not bring in the table light
But sits and dreams of the coming years
Alone at night.

The glow of evening flutters dim,
The gold bars over the doorsill creep,
And weary with the loss of him
She drops asleep!

NOCTURNE

II.

The old house looms behind the trees
Amid the singing rain,
Tuberoses scent the summer air
Along the garden lane.

Thin streams of water thread the paths,
Rain patters on the leaves,
Small puddles form around the porch
And underneath the eaves.

And somewhere overhead I hear
A loosened shutter creak
As though the empty house possessed
A tongue but could not speak.

NOCTURNE

III.

The dusk lays like a silken shroud
Upon the tired land,
Night's shadows like grim mourners crowd
Around on every hand.

Beneath us do the weary limbs
Of earth lie calm and still
As though night's sudden coming dims
The splendor of its will.

Beyond the hills the great sun dies,
The wind is cool and wet,
The trees against the cloudless skies
Stand forth in silhouette.

NOCTURNE

IV.

The sky grows heavy with the coming night,
A bird drones overhead,
Along the dim horizon golden bars
Turn into wondrous red.

The wind lays hands upon the leaves and
through
The valley far below
I see the evening mists tinged deep with blue
Along the river go.

And down the West as through some splendid
hall
The hurrying clouds go by
While night's stupendous purple curtains fall
Across the saffron sky.

NOCTURNE

V.

A winter night of still, cold stars.....
The village homes row after row
Are wide awake, their unclosed eyes
Look out upon the snow.

The warm breath of each little house
Curls slowly upward in the air;
Beneath our feet the creaking snow
Is crusted everywhere.

The icy trees are very still,
Each stands there like an armored knight
Who peers in stately silence through
The keen, blue air of night.

THE HOUSE OF RUIN

These are the hands that I have softly pressed
When love lit in her piteous eyes its light.....
They seem so slender and so very white
As they lie closely folded to her breast.
Now is the heart, love emptied, laid at rest
And all this music takes a sudden flight
Into the darkness of an unknown night
Beyond the south and east and north and west.

Death with a look upon his tired face
As though in wonder at our merriment,
When all the rusted strings are worn and bent
And every one pulled roughly out of place,
Lifts quietly the wasted instrument,
Puts it away and gently shuts the case.

DISILLUSION

*You have been a voice upon the silent waters,
The shadow of a sail in hidden harbors,
An echo in the richly fruited arbors
of my soul.*

Off where the mystic forms of dreams arise
Beyond the circlet of the sunset's hue,
Past all the wealth of worlds and paradise,
Past suns and stars and all the skies—to you!

This endless edifice of unknown things
Shall stop me not, nor hinder what I do,
For I have taken Fate's unfolded wings
And mount the steps of Time to wing to you.

Through darkness of the stilled and starry night,
Through shades that gather 'round the setting sun,
I take my lonely and untiring flight,
For Fate will tremble when your love is won.

Through loops of mellow light that transcend space,
Up from the bounds of shadeless sky I rise,
And through the mists close watch your mirrored face
And stand within the shadow of your eyes.

*You have been a voice upon the silent waters,
The shadow of a sail in hidden harbors,
An echo in the richly fruited arbors
of my soul.*

A sensuous silence falls, all fades behind,
I've passed the fringes of the heavens through,
My dream has spread its wings upon the wind;
Ah, surely this dim shadow is not you?

I've drunk life's spirit wine within your eyes,
And tasted lips still trembling with our fire,
I've hearkened to your heart's unuttered sighs
And breathed the air of passionate desire.

Why lies the image shattered at my feet?
Why must the echo vanish with the song?
Ah, but the memory is bitter sweet,
We know the truth yet we go on and on.

*You have been a voice upon the silent waters,
The shadow of a sail in hidden harbors,
An echo in the richly fruited arbors
of my soul.*

LYDIA

I killed her with these two slender hands.....
Oh, the flesh of her, the spirit of her, that understands!
And now I lay cool yellow flowers
Upon her breast.....Oh, the days that were hours!
And some of the petals I pick from the stem
For her flesh must feel the coolness of them.

THE OLD BLIND SINGER

She sat apart, her life a broken spell,
Without the courage or the love to find
Some glimmer in the years that lay behind
Like stricken leaves of fall.....this was the shell
That housed a mystery too deep to tell.

Her eyes, grey mirrors of an aged mind,
Had closed upon this ruin like a blind
Locked by its tenant as the darkness fell.

That which was beauty now was only skin
Drawn like dull parchment over every bone.
Around the toothless gums her lips were thin
And shorn of all the music they had known.
Her heart, a shattered casket, lay within,
Its dream gone out amid the winds, alone..

LILITH

Ah, Lilith, let us twine these flowers
Around the day's sweet sanctity
While love strings all the shining hours
Upon the flesh's rosary.....
For things turn back that now are ours
Into a growing yesterday.

Come, let us speak of lovely things
Close to our hearts while yet we may,
For Night shall wrap her star-strewn wings
About us when we go our way.....
All songs turn back that Love now sings
Into a growing yesterday.

A time comes when the heart is fed
Upon the things we build today
And things unfinished and unsaid
Shall rise to scorn and well they may.....
Then Love shall stand among the dead
Who haunt the growing yesterday.

THE DANCE

Ah! let this music never cease,
The throbbing viol and the flute,
Do we not dance together now?
Let other thoughts be mute.

Drain every cup of glistening wine
And let our laughter fill the halls.....
The shadows of the spluttering candles
Sink against the walls.

Outside the quiet stars look down
Upon a world that waits the dawn,
Within, the dancers wheel and spin
Still dancing on and on.

LYDÉ

I have been flying down the years
Knowing that when you came
My love should be a singing flame
That knew not hate nor scorn nor shame.....
Like music pouring in the ears
It rose above the thunder of the street,
It hid behind each face, it followed after,
Through all experience it beat
Cruel with the echo of its hungry laughter;
Out of the days it sprung to being,
And hearing, feeling, seeing,
At times all things sung with the wonder of its
grace.....
Ah! Love and in this hour
My fingers touch your face.

THE WIFE SPEAKS

I have grown weary of the evening hour
When your step sounds upon the stair;
I'm tired of this endless talk of work,
These wasted hands and white, white hair.

Each day the smell of breakfast through the rooms,
Your hurried kiss upon my lips.....
Ah, now, your very deeds of kindness seem
To lash me like so many whips.

All day I sew and cook and scrub and sweep;
And often when the evening nears
I stop a moment, tired out, to think
That we've been married twenty years.

THE ETERNAL RIDDLE

The bubbles which our fancies make
Like children with their pipes of clay,
Not one of them is thrown away.....
They glitter so before they break.

All beauty might exist to-day
Within the wonder of a face,
Within a sunset on a holy place,
Or in some word a friend might say.

Behold! Death from his hidden lair
Puts forth an atom of his power,
And in a year, nay in an hour,
That worshipped beauty is not there.

No idler kneeling at a shrine
Looks at the tinsel or the guilt,
Nor wonders how the church is built,
Nor from his thirst drinks of the wine.

What if these mortals who have trod
The crowded pathways of the earth
Find after death how small their worth,
And that beyond there is no God!

How shall the mightiest warrior feel
When he stands all unnoticed there
With dreams that never pierced the air
Where planets numbering myriads reel?

What shall the fleshly mortals do
When they are stripped of every breath
And haunt the barren halls of death?
How shall they fight when life is through?

They have not set themselves these beasts,
To quiet tasks of beauty, hand
In hand with those who understand.....
Instead, they dance and have their feasts.

I have been watching on the crest
Of many unseen hills.....I know
How these dull creatures come and go.....
Flesh, flesh, they have no rest.

And I have watched them blindly beat
A dreamer who has stood alone
Like some king beaten from his throne
Who fell beneath his people's feet.

How can they know? Their minds are still,
With naked hearts and hairy paws,
These makers of our very laws,
Dumb children of an unseen will.

This crowd that surges forth today
Might build a kingdom out of dust,
Or find Christ faithful to his trust,
Tear limb from limb and go their way.

'Tis best to be a dream of men,
A song within the halls of death
Than wasting life's inspired breath
On those who never look again.

The dreamer watches life go by,
Among the crowd he is unknown,
They heed him not and there alone
He gazes down the empty sky.

Our shadows linger on the wall
And we pass onward as we must,
And when our bones are scattered dust
Upon life's stones new shadows fall.

VICTORY

Life brings the mightiest warrior to his knee,
Destroys the dream that lights a poet's lays,
Kills every rose plucked in the hidden ways
And strips the bark from off the fruitless tree.
Each one must face the grim democracy
Of death, the frozen silence of the days
All shadowed with the setting sun's last rays
That come when we look back across the sea.

But life shall not do this when I am old,
Or leave me wondering what it is worth,
For when age strives to crush and leave me cold
With some dark jest that reeks with evil mirth,
I'll go down fighting for the things I hold
Too fine to be destroyed on the earth.

TO ONE OLDER

The broken instrument of love is still;
Our passion swept across its strings and went
Like some god knowing but its riotous will,
Drunk with the wine of love's mad merriment.

The instrument grew hungry for the touch
Of your warm fingers on its rusting wires
And found our love a music granting much
Yet leaving one grown weary with desires.

THE LUTANIST

I whisper softly in the vainest heart,
I scorn the fury of the strong;
Like wine I make the crumbling senses start
And cloak my coming in a song.

Along the borders of the wind I run,
Over the hills at break of day;
Between the shadows and the evening sun
I lift my lute and softly play.

I am the winter in the heart of spring,
I race around the earth at will,
I stir the world with endless murmuring
Of ancient music never still.

I whisper through the darkness of the night,
And in the twilight of the years
To every wasted heart my music's flight
Brings silence and the end of tears.

DRIVING AT NIGHT THROUGH THE COUNTRY

The night sky crowded heavily with stars,
The sharp word to the nervous horse,
A hurried farewell at the farmhouse door,
The gate opened and shut, the tingle of the open air
and darkness,
Then away down the road.
The dull patter of the horse's hoofs and the spark from
the loose stone,
The thick trees by the road, opening now and then to
let in the light of the stars along the horizon,
The crack of the whip and half stumble of the horse
quickenning his pace,
The feeling of utter warmth under the heavy laprobe;
A night ride under the stars in the country.

AGLAIA

And now when the evening flutters dim
The ghost of her memory comes to him,
Her shadow passes along the wall
Where the heavy velvet curtains fall
And the scent of a rare and dim perfume
Pervades the silence of the room.....

MAERIE

Our love was like a violin
Under a high-strung bow,
And whether joy lurked more therein
Than sorrow, I do not know.

Though laughter sparkled in her heart,
Grief came with the other things
For it's hard to keep the twain apart
On the violin's musical strings.

The bow of my affection stirred
Each little throbbing wire,
And the sweetest music I've ever heard
Was that of her desire.

THE CONTRAST

I had wandered alone the city street,
By brickyards, through the ill-lit park
Where the traffic's rumbling echoes meet
The utter silence of the dark;

By the gas works, through the filthy air,
By cluttered-up saloons and stores,
Small homes that house unending care,
By broken windows, battered doors;

I followed where an alley led
And in an open space alone
A fragile flower raised its head
And blossomed there: a gift unknown.

MARY MAGDALENE TO CHRIST

I have loved you better than all the world.
With my hair did I cleanse your feet, with my eyes
did I bathe you in my love.
Beloved, I went stooping through the streets when the
sky was black.
I listened to the cries of the mob.
The lips you had so often kissed quivered with pain.
The hands you had held to your hot cheeks clutched
my breast in agony.
I knelt at the foot of the cross.
I saw you die, my lover, I saw you die.
I saw you gasp and drop your head.
And I am a woman.
I am jealous that they have made of you a Son of God.
We were happy ere you declared yourself.
Now the hours tremble with your absence, the nights
choke in my throat.
Christ, Christ, I loved you so.....

DE MORTUIS

The tapers cast their shadows everywhere,
Across her breast, her eyes, her mouth, her hair.

We are alone; each taper bends and drips
While I rain kisses on her still soft lips.

The shadows flicker on the walls and floor,
Faint sounds of voices reach me past the door.

The tapers bend and drip, the voices go,
The hours pass deliberate and slow.

She was a lady of a high-born race.....
The tapers bend and drip.....I kiss her face.

Ah! now to kneel within this heavy gloom
Here buried living in Miladi's tomb.

AFTERWARDS

I.

And all the years shall be like fresh flowers
That I shall lay at your feet.....
Their drooping heads shall be the token of my dreams
That will die
And waken each year like the new flowers of spring.

II.

The music of your flesh
Shall echo down the corridors of my spirit
Until the doors are locked.....
Even those echoes will be locked with me forever.

III.

My spirit shall rise to splendid music
Under the memory of your hands.....

FREDERICK BOOTH

In a sparsely furnished room;
No pictures on the walls;
Alone with his work, his dream, his understanding of
 reality;
Seeing through you with quiet eyes,
Lighting his pipe and laying it after one puff on the
 table;
Possessed of a certain realization of life.....
There he works,
Confident, determined, and brutally direct.

BENEDICITE

I felt her cool, slim hands in mine,
Soft flesh of wondrous grace...
She raised her lips and gave them me,
Her hair about my face.

Within her did love's glad refrain
Find glorious liberty,
And therein mixed with our desires
Lurked God's own mystery.

MERLE

**Though my heart sings,
Perhaps all the gifts I've given to you
Are but flowers dead ere they were plucked
From the hidden gardens of heaven.**

**Your warm lips tremble with love's soft voice,
Your heart throbs from what I've conquered and with
what you have yet to give.
All I possess lies glittering, awaiting you,
A poverty-stricken heap of baubles....
But what you have given me turns the winter of my
heart to spring,
And stirs the old embers to new flames.**

**I am unworthy of it all:
Of the stars you hold forward in your soft hands,
Of the rising sun in your eyes.
I can but gather up my feeble things
And fling them breathlessly before your feet!**

TO—

I am jealous of you, boy,
For in every movement, every change of expression, every
 trait,
I can see that which her wondrous hands have wrought.
There is a kinship between us unknown to your silly
 innocence—
Behind us both is the shadow of her passion.

AFTER DUSK

It is a dream now you have left me here
Without the music of your flesh to fill
The long, long nights that are so strangely
still

Mother Mary! hundreds in a year!
The touch of your strong hands that drew me near
Yet lingers like an echo of your will
While all the hidden strings of passion thrill
With melodies unheard by human ear.

A dream called Life has passed within
And every thread that held us close is cut;
These hands are still they seem but
faded skin
That trembled once when Love's hand delicate
Played softly there some threnody of sin
Before the gilded doors of passion shut.

PHARAIS

Nay, I am not the voice that whispers in thy heart,
Not she whom thou seekest....
I am only the breath of a memory that blows through
thee like a mad wind.

I have seen the weaving of a dream within thine eyes
When thou hast seemed most wild with desire;
A dream not of me but of another.

I, too, have loved, and loving know that ours is only
a shadow,
Only a rose plucked too early from the stem.
I know and forgive thee, child.
Many a star shines unseen,
But never a love went begging for a mistress....
Go on thy way to her.

TWO OLD WOMEN

Two old women talking by a door,
Two old women by a door,
Talking of many an ancient thing,
Talking, mumbling, whispering,
With heads held close together
There by the door in spring weather.

What do they talk of you ask?
'Twere but a senseless task.
Enough for you and me,
Only you and me,
To cling to the memory
Of the old faces in the door,
Two old women in the door
Chattering like magpies o'er
Things that we do not know
And shall never know.....
And turning we leave them so!

MARIUS THE EPICUREAN

This is a human soul thou givest me,
Uplifted like a light in thine own hands
From out the silence of those ancient lands
Aflame with blazing immortality.
Mine own desired Marius! Yet see
How through its pages one heart understands
That fame is but an hour glass whose sands
Bring death unto our wasted sovereignty.

A dozen times I've read these pages o'er
And reached out dimly in a dream to hear
Beyond the Roman clash and ceaseless roar
A living voice that spoke within my ear,
Touched human hands beyond an opened door
And felt the warmth of your rich presence near.

OUT OF THE YEARS

I.

This room will be a holy memory
When echoes of this music madden me.
Ah! love, for you and me to always know
That love could stir the human spirit so.
And when we feel that future loneliness,
Some hint of this, some touch of loveliness
Will linger like dumb wonder in the breast,
Will linger and will stir us with unrest.
And lying in my arms you say to me:
“Can you still find new dreams, new poetry,
In all these hidden and mysterious things.....?”
My Love a bird that first unfolds its wings
Is not content to stay within the nest;
It dreams of flight beyond the mountain crest,
And taking to the open wing it flies
Into the widening distance of the skies.
And I who have arisen in my flight
Beyond the confines of the day and night,
Have heard new music of the whirling spheres
Far down the halls of the receding years.

II.

We have lain flesh to flesh, and breast to breast,
Stirred to our depths by love's divine unrest,
Hands interlocked and limbs entwined as one.....
Hours that have flamed and roared and spun,
Your lips afeast on mine, mouth holding me
With all the pent-up songs that love sets free.
Ah, hungry have I been for you.....I've known
That this dream must arise to claim its own
Out of the sleepless years and give to me
A splendid and immortal memory.
Come, Love, the very room speaks of these things.
My dream has found itself, it knows its wings
For something strange and new to rise upon
Like birds that soar across the early dawn.
Your hands come forth to meet my own and close
I kiss you like the bee the open rose
When summer is a thing of wondrous hours,
Luxurious days and fields of nodding flowers.....
Love has its own griefs and its merriment,
Ah, well it knows this vivid instrument,
This trembling body and this flesh that leaps
Beneath my hands to life and never sleeps.....

III.

And in the silence of those after years
When only fleshly echoes fill our ears
Remember how we met and how I knew
Love smouldered in the inmost heart of you
Like some mad fire which my heated breath
Could waken from its lethargy of death;
Remember how love always understands
And how our blood leaped when our trembling hands
Met and you gave your mouth in glad defeat.....
Remember all of this, for it is sweet
To know that out of life at least one heart
Made every flaming sense within you start
Like music from a splendid instrument.....
You will remember when the years are spent
And rust has coated every bleeding string
That now beneath my hand's touch throb and sing;
You will recall how we read by the fire
When Love lay in the arms of soft desire.

IV.

Last night we read from Keats where Porphyro
Melts in his lady's dream and when the low
Light of life's candle splutters at the brim
Those lines shall keep our dream from growing dim.
Ah, is it not a wondrous thing that we
Have built ourselves this house of memory?
And here while you are close I wonder whether
This flesh of ours that sings when we're together
Could rise to greater and inspired heights
Beyond the pulsing splendour of these nights.
And when I thrill to feel your hair that whips
About my face, about my eyes and cheeks and lips,
I dream of other worlds to be still won
Beyond the setting of your passion's sun.....
We could not sink with shaken limbs upon
The rug before my blazing fire drawn
And hope to rise with sleepless, rare delight
If all but body lust had taken flight
Into the glory of a single night.
But holding you I know that our desire
Arouses every dream like liquid fire
Pouring in a hot stream through your veins
From head to foot, and as it ebbs and wanes
New streams rush forth and all the flesh sings out.

V.

Is this red-lipped desire but a storm
That gathers when your little heart is warm
With hunger and the soul is bitterness?
Have you thus given of your loveliness,
Stirred me with promises you cannot keep,
Or wakened from the spirit's lonely sleep
When all the songs of many hidden years
Rise up to fill with wonder listening ears?
Have you aroused a thing you knew not of,
Or played, a child, with all the toys of love?
You gave yourself.....you knew I understood
That all you did was beauty.....all was good
And sweet that raised me to the sleepless heights
Of passion through these red, immortal nights.
When my hot kisses fell upon your lips
And hands were hungrily upon your hips
And arms and neck and shoulders, on your hair,
And you lay trembling with a dear despair,
Was all that nothing but a fleshy thing,
A wondrous bird that could not soar or sing?
Did you allow me through those days to rise
To promises I dreamed within your eyes?
Now when I hold you close, when our hands meet
And we are throbbing, love.....is that not sweet?

Someday alone we will remember this,
This giving of your body's loveliness
As flowers underneath the sun's warm hands
Whose every petal throbs and understands.

YOUR BOOK

This is your book, Love.
From the sanctity of its leaves arises the odor of you,
A wistful perfume heavy with loneliness.
The dead lines speak your presence,
The yellowing pages a passion.
Your hands hover around them.
This is your much loved boook.

THE VASE

I was a temple builder, rearing high
A structure in the silence of the sky

Wherein were things of transcendental mold,
With idols dumb, of heavily burnished gold.

And when the finishing of the temple neared,
I chose one solitary room veneered

With whitest ivory, where I should place
In glittering rows each finished, dream-carved vase.

In every vase I locked a poem tight,
Within a casket jewelled as the night

With starry gems incrusted in the wood;
And on each cover a molten silver rood.

Then darkness came, my stately temple fell
As all shall built 'tween fires of Heaven and Hell.

But one vase from that ruin was regained,
One carven vase unbroken and unstained;

I broke the clasp, the interior was bare,
With but a pile of ashes lying there.

LIFE

One horde that struggle through the dusk
With eyes that look in keen despair
Upon life's radiant, hollow husk
And find no hint of beauty there.

One horde that laugh and loiter here,
Who drink and clothe their bodies well,
Who sing away the whole rich year
And haunt the twisted streets of hell.

A few that work and watch and pray,
Who dream new worlds from out the strife,
A few that will not turn away,
But linger heart and hand with life.

ON REVISITING A CITY AFTER A YEAR

Are these the streets? They do not speak to me
With their old clattering tongues.....all life seems
fled,

And they are but the ghosts of things long dead
Whose warmth still lingers in the memory.

Once every corner was a mystery,
Each tramp an oracle whose wisdom fed
My hungry soul by what it left unsaid.....
Ah! youth's courageous, frail philosophy.

These grey streets are but dull streets after all,
These houses built of crumbling wood and stone.....
Where is the charm I found at evenfall
When I came wandering here to dream alone?
This city seems an empty banquet hall
Whose splendid revelry and guests have flown.

LAIS

Dear love I've tasted of each rounded cup
That your warm fingers, trembling, have held up.

I've risen like the hunter for the chase
And felt your hair like wind about my face;

Upon the steeds of passion ridden fast
To win the dream whose glory might have passed

Invisible upon its wingèd feet.

I've loitered 'neath your chamber window, sweet,

Or wandered down the vale, the hills around,
And wonderingly lain on a sloping mound

Where stretched full length the unwatched moments pass
With my face buried in the tangled grass.

* * *

Your lips are as a flower where the bee
Might suck his richest honey trembling.....

Together we have plucked the living fire
Like fruit from off the trees of our desire.

I've felt the pulse-beat of the flesh like pain
When lips shut tightly on your lips again,

My arms like vises locked around your limbs
Until all space and time and sorrow dims

Like music when the instrument is still,
And love becomes the creature of our will.

Close to each other, eager for the chase,
I've felt your lovely hands about my fac

**As though my kisses raised to fever heat
Each tingling muscle to your very feet.**

**Until with beating heart you've lifted up
Within your shaking hands the slender cup**

**From which you drank as though you would refresh
The spirit with the sweetness of the flesh.**

* * *

**And weary of the chase, I raised my head
To watch your panting body on the bed.**

OUT OF OUR HANDS' REACH

Age gives us back the unseen things of night,
The grey, discarded litter of our days;
And dead loves buried in the hidden ways
Rise up to mock us robed in deathless white.
Blind eyes see through the darkness into light
While all the things youth's hungry heart obeys
Become like some immortal poet's lays.....
Out of our hands' reach, yet within the sight.

To-day a child runs to its father's knee,
A lover goes unto his love's embrace,
A vessel surges through the restless sea,
A hare flees trembling in a hunting chase.....
Then like a flash comes down the enemy
Who steals the dreams that light each living
face.

MOODS

I.

Alas, I have hardly met youth.
Only a flash of light through the darkness,
Then dark again.

II.

There are times when the heart sinks to the earth
Like a wounded bird
Riddled with the bitter kindnesses of well-meaning
friends;
Times when we must go to the chapel of the soul
And burn incense before the goddesses of memory.

III.

Memory is the rainbow risen
After the storm of love.

TO L—

I heard in the great white silence
Your lips afame with song;
The still air began to throb with music.....
I could have reached forth and clutched the stars;
I could have dreamed moodily against the breast of God;
Or played with the golden hair of the Sun;
Instead I heard you whispering to me across the wastes
And like a tired child I dropped wearily into your arms.

ARTHUR WILSON

Clothing scattered in every direction,
Dirty dishes on chairs,
Gas stove spluttering in the center of the floor,
Neckties hanging from the chandelier,
Suitcases opened,
A large screen covering one corner,
A box supporting a typewriter
Before which he sits and works
Utterly oblivious of the confusion and the noise.

So has it been with him through life.....
Struggling through each element of his philosophy,
Amid waste and scattered remnants;
Convinced of the truth of certain things,
Not to be swerved lightly,
But once convinced
Holding to the tenet of that conceived idea
With cold logic.

Eyes set deeply on each side of a sensitive nose;
Hesitant at times,
Again, plunging into concise descriptions,
Hitching himself slightly in the chair
As though to add emphasis.

TO A CERTAIN POET

There comes to us all that bitter time
When we cannot love or turn a rhyme,
When lips grow pulpy and the belly round
And we hang like meat above the ground.

TO ALL POETS

Like well-worn dimes
The old, old rhymes
Are used a thousand, thousand times.

THE BANQUET TABLE

How beautiful is a woman's flesh!
Covering itself with dazzling warmth like a veil.
How wonderful it is to run our hands over the soft skin
 of the loved one;
To press mouth against mouth, quivering;
To look into half-closed eyes aglow with dreams and
 feel the heart beat underneath your own;
To touch the hair fondly with trembling fingers;
To lie side by side in the darkened room, body against
 body,
And peer into the windows of nearby houses, wondering
 at the life that is choked therein.....
The winds of passion shake much green fruit from
 the tree.

TO D—

Some blessed miracle brought you to me once again.
I thought your love was laid away among withered
flowers
In the cold, still sepulchre of the year;
That I had lost you forever.
But now your letter lies within my hand, fresh with
memories.
Within me throb those ineffable hours of warm desire,
those nights of love.
By the subtle touch of this innocent-looking paper
I am flooded with you.
I could reach across the night and touch you, you are
so near.

MARGARET SANGER

I.

You hear of her.....
Slashing, tearing at the dull conventions.
You picture a brawny creature of gaunt, heavy limbs
Who swings like some fierce tempest through the world.

You meet her.....
A frail appearing spirit;
A hungry flower drooping before the rain;
A silent, whirling dynamo of energy;
Suspended song.....
Her eyes like stars radiant in the earth's night,
Head to one side.....a bird listening for the voice
of spring.

You leave her.....
Her presence lingers like a work of art
Which has expressed the untold mystery of life
In golden sunshine and fragile colors,
Something that will live
Not because of courage and a dream of life,
But because of an instant, fundamental, emotional, truth.

II.

You have stood there in court like a soldier dreaming of
the lands
Yet to be conquered by your flaming will.....
Dreams, dreams they were that shake the world like
madness;
Stirring the dead to life,
Hovering like sunlight in your eyes,
Transfusing your spirit into something rich and strange.

III.

While these cowards of life bask in their ease,
Treading their grimy paths,
Earning their selfish ends,
You lie like a flower in the cellar of the world,
Tossed aside by convention.....
But the Future, like a poet, shall raise your petals to
his lips
And the wonder of your dream
Will beat through his songs like the tread of a god's feet.

THE NIGHT EXPRESS

Sweeping out of the lanes of night,
Roaring you come with gathering speed,
A shrieking, iron, clangorous steed
That shakes the darkness in its flight.

Out of the shadows, thundering down,
Panting with lungs of lordly steel,
Tossing your head, you crash and reel,
Swinging your way through the country town.

The windows rattle; you are gone
With the dying echoes down the street,
You and your galloping, tireless feet
Thundering, thundering, thundering on.

Your sinuous form has taken its flight;
The town sinks back into easy sleep
As your mighty echoes roar and leap
Through the parted curtains of the night.

Over the tracks that hum with song,
Over the rails of glittering steel,
You creak and tremble 'and groan and reel,
Thundering, thundering, thundering on.

And when you have come to the end of the road
You stand on the track and whistle and sing,
Each little part of you whispering
Like one who has lifted a heavy load.

All of the power is still through the length
Of your shapely body of steel and wood;
You catch your breath 'neath the station hood,
A quiet thing of slumbering strength.

CARYYL

Love, I am dreaming of conquering a world all my own,
A thin wisp of fame
Snatched like a thread from the loom of time.

Grow young with me and forget
The breath of dead years hovering in vacant rooms
of memory.

Come, hold my hand and lay your head on my shoulder,
I have but a moment to spend before the firelight.
I cannot linger with passion and grow weak in love
As did Antony.....

Let me seek Augustian empires,
And be our love as a distant star far down the channels
of night.

I must conquer a world of my own,
A thin wisp of nothingness
Snatched from a world of reality,
And set the shadow of myself over the printed page.

SIX SONNETS

I.

Your hair fell tumbling all around your face
Like darkness in a myriad slender strands;
And there within this splendour moved your hands
Like shafts of light that move with infinite grace.
We sat and talked around the fireplace
And roamed with poetry to unknown lands.....
Ah! now, this wakened spirit understands
How stars fall bleeding into vacant space.

Love has his subtleties of flesh and form,
His own dim secrets and his sudden spells,
And out of nothing he can build a storm
To shake down all the mightiest citadels.....
Or light a fire to keep a dead heart warm.....
Love has his own way and he never tells.

II.

When this brief summer turns into the snows
Of winter and the last rare days are spent
Within the arms of Love's mad merriment
And we stand many worlds apart.....suppose
That all the music that this hour knows
Should slumber like a song whose echo went
Far in the heart.....would you know what it
meant
If you received a single yellow rose?

Each year life will renew these mysteries,
The heart will go back to the songs we sing.....
For every year life strips the dreaming trees,
Each fall the birds take to the open wing,
But all return like living memories
When winter has been conquered by the spring.

III.

Love may meet Love and go upon his way
And never know and never understand
How life, like some rare flower, might expand;
How every minute goes and will not stay.
But sometime when the debts we never pay,
Around us in the gathering darkness stand
We shall remember how Love's slender hand
But for a moment in our fingers lay.

A thousand miles stretched like a fog between
Us in the room.....a thousand nameless things
Rose up like angry knives whose blades are keen,
And all the heart's awakened questionings
Caught in our throats, and eyes sank all unseen
Into a single pool of wonderings.

IV.

What would you do if I made love to you?

Would you make me a slave to bow before

The shadow that I found beyond the door

Where each love stood awhile and then passed
through?

Would you be weary when at last you knew

That all loves have their day and not one more?

Would you beat at my window when the roar
Of love's flame settled to a sickly hue?

Would we find in the sunshine food for tears

And in the sunset of that splendid day

Build up a sorrow that would haunt the years

Till life's last song forever passed away?

And have you strength to know how life appears

When love's cup, emptied, must be thrown away?

V.

Last night we did not meet because a tryst
Held you with your anointed God, and I
Who have no God but you must wonder why
A new love on an old love should subsist.....
Yet on these shreds a great dream can exist
Or go into the wilderness and die.....
Ah! love, far down the dead and vacant sky
The sun's warm fingers weave the twilight mist.

These evenings gather like a splendid storm
That fills the heart's horizon like the night.....
Beyond these days huge clouds collect and form
Pierced by their sudden shafts of ribboned light;
But all the air is breathing and is warm
Where I stand dreaming on our hidden height.

VI.

These things are older than the hills, my dear
So old that all we say and do and feel,
Each tender word, each passionate appeal
Graced other loves in every mortal year.
But need these thoughts close up our hearts with fear?
Beyond where planets after planets reel,
Beyond the world of clanging flesh and steel,
The old loves rouse themselves and gather near.

In Cleopatra's arms did Antony
Pledge passion far more ancient than the power
First wielded by the oldest Ptolomy.....
And you and I in this delicious hour
Know all the wonder of that mystery
That might crush empires or a single flower?



LHOUETTES OF THE CITY



SILHOUETTES OF THE CITY

THE OLD HOUSE

Just an old brick house,
One among many others in a dreary block.
But like the houses of the city it has an individual voice,
Its own memories, its own sadness.
Here I lived in the springtime of my years,
In that room with the dull, silent windows.
And through that hall came to my door
One whose hand and voice will never be forgotten,
The kindest secret of my heart.
Old house, I wonder how many others have lived within
you.

THE COMMUTERS

I.

A thin stream through the gates,
Weary-looking men and women laden with bundles,
Seeming as dumb oxen led to the slaughter.

II.

The country station,
The dirty train emptying its load into the dusk,
The line of jaded people trailing up the country road one
after another.

"How's your garden?" asks one.
"It 'ud be O. K. if 't 'ud rain."
Some of them look up at the sky in a questioning way.

III.

Home!
After nearly a two hour journey.
A woman comes to the door wiping her hands upon a
soiled apron.
"Hello John."
"Hello Annie."
In a little while, after dinner, is heard the whirr of the
lawn mower.

IV.

Night and a sky full of stars.
The children put to sleep.
John and Annie lying side by side,
An early breakfast ahead of them.

IN THE PARK

As it happened, according to one of the strange whims of
Fate,
A Poet and an ordinary Tramp took seats together in
the park.
Also was it strange to note that the tramp fell asleep and
had a beautiful dream;
The Poet remained awake thinking of where he could
get something to eat.

INCIDENTS

I.

I saw them bring him in, silent on the stretcher,
Worn out from shrieking with pain.
I heard one say as he rubbed some blood off his hands,
"Train hit 'im. Hellish luck, I say. He yelled like sixty
when we took him out of the car."

II.

Down the street came one of the most hideous dwarfs
imaginable,
Blear-eyed, shrivelled, sitting high upon a cart
Filled with copies of the New York Journal.

III.

The fellow stepped up to the waste paper can,
A well-dressed quiet chap,
And searching among the mass of dirty, sodden stuff he
found a copy of the day's paper
Thrown there just a moment before.
Hardly looking around he went away with it.

IV.

Why was she sitting on the station plaza?
A slim, wisp of a girl in khaki dress, reading.
A bit of sea spray tossed upon the beach of life
And lost in a moment with a wave of new impressions.

V.

Two sitting side by side drive suddenly up to the station.
They kiss.....strangely done without the moving of arms
or bodies,
As though they were manikins.

VI.

I caught just an instant view of them as I passed.
In the third story window a negro woman was combing
her lover's hair.
She was bending lovingly over the wool.....

VII.

He stood under the tree on the corner,
Stooped and silent.
What was he looking for?
Had he not found something after all these years?

VIII.

I saw them talking.
The girl about twenty-two, the boy still in knee-pants.
A union of types often seen in the city.

THE CAR CONDUCTOR

Threading his way up the crowded car,
"Fares please, fares please,"
Ringing the register bell and wearily making change.
With slouchy uniform and heavily lidded eyes.
One of the City's many children reared at her barren
breast.

THE WALK TO WORK

The early morning air!
The line of people filling the bright sidewalks;
The smiling faces of the girls;
The full stride of men swinging forward;
A sudden, sharp whistle; the deep booming of
a church bell.

THE LITTLE SISTER

Each morning you sat reading in the courtyard,
Blessed little white sister,
Your quiet face bent over the open pages,
Silent, alone in the sunlit courtyard.

SUNDAY CROWDS

You are utterly different today.
The hurried look, the hunted, driven manner is
absent.
You move leisurely here and there,
Whole families of you gayly bedecked.
Gazing in the windows, at the moving picture signs.
Sallow youths smiling at over-dressed girls,
Clerks at ease mingling with other clerks,
Bankers, tramps, policemen.....
All seeking pleasure.

THE STORE

Counters piled high with cloth goods,
Counters with hundreds of different things to be sold.
A noisy, pushing crowd of useless, talkative women.
A few sallow men holding bundles
And trying to flirt with the shop girls behind their
wives' backs.

THE WEDDING

I heard the organ softly playing and watched the crowd
of people around the church doorway.

A moment later a laughing, chattering group came out,
among them the bride and groom; she blushingly
hanging her pretty head; he, striding forward
manfully, trying not to glance to the right nor the
left.

The cab door gave its dull slam and amid a shower of
things they drove off.

A huge sign hung on the back reading: "Newly Married."
A few blocks down the street I passed a funeral and saw
two little children skipping a rope.

THE LUNCHROOM

I passed the dairy lunch where the proprietor had killed
his wife's lover early one morning.
The man had come in to get a cup of coffee and was
shot down as he stood at the counter.
The proprietor is serving a life sentence.
I thought of that.
I wondered if he was thinking of the place as I passed it.

THE METROPOLITAN SPIRIT

He had meant to purchase only a five cent cigar,
But he saw two pretty women and a young man standing
by the counter.
So he said to the clerk,
"I would like a twenty-five cent cigar—a mild one."
It was his last quarter, but he had the delight of claiming
the instant
And passing admiration of an audience.

CITY LOVERS

How fondly does she cling to your arm,
Trusting you with everything,
And how proudly you hold her back from
 a passing machine;
You are her ideal of perfection,
You pitiful specimen of city life.

Cling to each other while ye may, lovers,
Cling to your little happiness,
For soon all flowers wither.

THE HARLOT ON SUNDAY MORNING

Take your head in from the window,
Sister; no business this morning.
Your paint and sickly smile hurt the sunlight.

THE LIBRARY

entered the marble corridors of the building
And watched the readers in the stillness.
could hear my heart beat.
suddenly a child's voice rang out like clear music in a
quiet wood.
ome female poring over a book, raised a head covered
with stingy hair:
Hush the brat. How can I read?"

ON A HOT NIGHT

We were walking through an alley, the painter and
myself, one awfully hot night.
We came suddenly upon the sound of music and a shaft
of light across the paving stones from an open
doorway.
Not knowing of our presence a negro wench was dancing
in a mad whirlwind of emotion,
Ignorant of the heat, twisting her black body into a
hundred shapes.
We watched her,
Wondering at the grace, the ease and lightness of her
half naked form,
The revolt to barbarism,
The outpouring of a healthy passion.

THE AUCTION

The old grey house was being emptied into strong vans
lined up at the curb.
I passed through the vacant rooms and was awed by
their barren appearance.
So this was the house I had so often dreamed of as I
walked by the hedge to and fro from work
And looked at the top of the hill;
And that was the master,
That pitiful-looking specimen facing the doorway with
proud lip,
Seeing with unseeing eyes the furniture pass down the
steps.
All that he loved perished there.

ON THE CORNER.

**Standing on the corner an evening long
Every personality that passed was a strange one.**

**TO A MOTION-PICTURE ACTOR KILLED IN A
RAILWAY ACCIDENT**

Though killed still do you appear on the screen.
They make you dance and gibber for the crowd
And shake the bones now crumbling in their coffin.
You twist the face now worm eaten,
And smile forth at me.
Poor fellow of the dust, some of us dance too long
anyhow.

THE TRAIL

All the way down the street we watched them,
A humorous parallel of fate—
The hearse following the ambulance.

THE OLD WOMAN

The car was crowded,
Suffocated with passengers.
Suddenly the dense pack separated and a fat old lady
entered carrying a string of fish.
Five minutes later the two platforms spilled over with
people struggling for air.
She blinked her eyes at the few remaining ones, saying
to herself,
'My fish ain't rotten. My fish ain't rotten. It's good
fish.'

THE EARLY SWIM

The cold water on the naked form;
The sharp touch like an electric shock tingling the blood;
The rush of water by the ears, the swift strokes ahead,
 the blood surging to the skin;
The loud calls from the shore;
Wet hair, stinging eyes. . . .
Oh, the first swim of the year early in May!

THE GRAVE

Here, low mound, I toss you a flower
Fragrant with the touch of God's lips.
I have plucked it from the roadside.

The stars flood the sky ere I go upon my way
Through the dusk like a shadow
Holding the memory of that flower.

THE RAILROAD ATTORNEYS

The men sat about the room chatting in a cloud of smoke,
Discussing coldly the case of a woman killed by a car.
I listened.
So these were the lawyers of the company,
Slim men behind glaring, black-rimmed glasses.
They were seeking some loophole by which they could
cheat
The family of the indemnity,
And somehow as I got up to leave
I felt half ashamed at being there. . . .
To be rich and influential
One must do so many dirty things.

CAMP FIRES OF THE CITY

**The women of the city are as a host of fires in the dark.
We are in doubt as to whom to turn to for warmth and
light.**

THE STREET

Dusty and noisy, gray with a stream of life.
At the far end a loophole of light leading into the sky.
A patch of deep blue as though seen through the end of
a tunnel.

THE BARBER SHOP

Three or four chairs with talkative barbers leaning over them.

Men sitting in a cloud of smoke, reading the papers, gossiping like old women, getting into arguments over the day's news.

An old number of the Police Gazette lying on the floor.
A sleepy negro boy in the corner.

One of them is talking loudly about his family, telling the others how his wife does this or that.

"The old woman didn't like my getting piffled the other night."

There is some laughter and stirring of papers.

Jim, the head barber, delivers a long oration about wives in general, his in particular.

MOVING PICTURES

The flaring signs,
The tired face at the box-office,
The pushing, pleasure-hungry crowd streaming through
the doors.

And within:

Darkness and a small, square space of light alive with
motion;

Horrid, clanging music,
Shuffling feet, hand clappings for an idol,
The air heavy with perspiration and deep breathing.

IN THE DOORWAY

"You might say as we was happy,
Dependin' on how fast or slow you said it.
The old man don't say much, nor I.
We've made the bargain, then there's the kids.
But ever since I got took with Bill he ain't never smiled
hardly.
Oh, he's good as pie; nothin' like that.
There ain't no better husband than him.
I ran away and thought better on it and came back.
The old man was here with our kids and he didn't let
on to 'em a thing.
But we ain't never slept together since.
I guess we all make our mistakes one time or 'nother.
Here he comes now."

SPRING

When you laid your hand in mine 'twas like some flower
of the cool, sweet woods
Given to me trustingly.

THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY

The people of the city are not to be despaired of;
I have seen them laugh happily and look up at the stars.

THE DEAD YEARS

Rose leaf and autumn
And a fragrance of old days,
The music of the flesh.

THE DAIRY LUNCH

The shining windows, the heaps of food,
The tiled floors, walls and counters;
The dull countenances of the waiters and the men sitting
 around in large-armed chairs,
Reading their papers, eating and talking,
With their stomachs shining through their eyes.

THE FIRE SALE

Around the broken windows and peeping in the doorway
at the sodden clothing
Was a huge crowd. . . .
Maggots surging after dead meat.

THE BRIDGE

The great bridge looms up in the darkness,
Graceful, distant, mysterious,
Its slender iron work threading the air like a spider's
web.

AT THE RESTAURANT

He was sharply querulous, petulant, ordering the tired
waitress hither and thither,
Complaining of the food.
Take your fifteen cents, O Small Soul, take it and
purchase some flowers for the woman you have no
doubt crushed to the earth.
Behind every cheap man there is the shadow of a broken-
hearted woman.

THE PUBLIC SPEAKER

He rises pompously and delivers his oration that contains platitude after platitude.

"Be saving, young man, and you will succeed.

Go to bed early, rise with the sun. . . ."

As the crowd cheers him he bows, taking his seat and wiping his face with a large handkerchief.

THE CHAIR

Some person spoke from the draped chair left in the studio,
A voice struggled for utterance, heavy with eager passion,
A voice that suggested eyes filled with dreaming expectancy,
Heart weary from longing, desirous for her lover.

THE DANCE OF DEATH

It was a dingy funeral.

**They rested the ugly coffin on the sidewalk and went
indoors for a moment.**

**A crowd of boys formed a circle around it and danced
gleefully.**

IN THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE

The man and the woman sat waiting facing each other.
Having nothing to do she managed devilishly to excite
him
By artfully crossing one leg over the other,
Exposing a stretch of stocking.
A moment later she screamed.
In answer to the call she said, "He tried to flirt with
me."
The man said nothing.

ON THE CAR

You smiled at me
And for the pleasure of your eyes
I rode three stations beyond my own
And had to walk back, having no more money.

SEX

The young girl came walking by.....
A sixteen year old boy sitting with older men saw her.
A smutty remark was passed by one of them.
The boy's eyes glistened with newly awakened desire,
Drinking in her slender form.

IN THE DOORWAY

Early morning.

A crumpled mass of flesh curled on the doorstep, asleep!
No doubt resting there after a fruitless night wandering
the streets, looking into happy restaurants and
conventional homes.

A small mass of dung dropped by Society.

THE SINGER

Alone upon the curbing and surrounded at a safe distance
by the usual crowd,
He sang as though to an unseen audience,
Now bowing and almost scraping the pavement with a
battered derby,
Now swinging his arms and lifting his face to the sky.
I turned disgusted from the cheap minds that made fun
of his insanity.
His was at least a perfect vision to him; their's only
the ability to sneer.

THE SHOPGIRL

The little maid stood talking to a sallow youth on the corner.
She was clothed in a pitiful imitation of the current styles.
But in her hand she held a rose which she pressed against her cheek,
And I saw the boy lean over and touch it with his long, lean fingers.

SUMMER

One ice wagon had stopped behind another;
The drivers went into a saloon.
Meanwhile the two horses in the rear lapped the ice
sticking out of the front wagon.

SUNDAY MORNING

They were emptying the garbage from the rear door
Of the stylish restaurant.
Strong men lifted the reeking cans to the wagons.

I looked into one of them.
Here was a piece of lettuce no doubt discarded by
Miladi's lovely fingers the night before,
While many of her sisters were sleeping, or trying to
sleep, in their stuffy quarters,
Too weary to have even wondered at their lot.

Here were the ruins of tomatoes.
Were they discarded by some slender-waisted member of
the aristocracy?
Perhaps its flavor had not suited him.
I remembered seeing a poor dog asleep in the gutter
early that morning.
I woke him up and gave him enough to get a cup of
coffee.....

HORSES

"Horses for sale," read the sign on the horse wagon.
A few hours later I stood outside the railing and looked
at the horses, worn out from toil, waiting to be
taken away.
One glance at that pitiful, broken, listless group was
all that was needed to drive me away wondering.

THE SUICIDE

The room smelt like an opened coffin
With the odor of mouldy furniture.....

It seemed rather strange.

The battered blinds with the streak of sunlight pouring
through a slit.

The heavy silence.

He had managed it cleverly.

A piece of rope over the head of the bed,

One end around his neck,

And his knees drawn up against his stomach,

The eyes starting from their sockets,

The clenched hands and bloated tongue between his lips.

And all because he had loved passionately, hopelessly.

THE FRUIT

Perhaps I've shaken the unripe fruit from the tree,
Shaken the slender bough hardly through with blossoming,
Ere it was season-ripe.
But, ah! how I loved it,
This unripe fruit.

THE OLD WOMAN

Brooding no doubt upon her cares
She sat upon the night-court stairs,
With faded jacket and a skirt
Grown dingy with the years of dirt.
Within her eyes the glimmering light
Had slowly turned back into night,
And the voice that haunted that empty head
Had left no echo of what it said.....
Love understands when the flesh is dead.
And do you sit there wondering
Of vigor and youth?.....Ah! not a thing
But a wasted house of lust and sin
For the odor of death to linger in.

THE AVERAGE MIND

Have you ever heard in the night the mysterious drip,
drip, drip of an open spigot in the kitchen?
Some men's minds are like this, always dripping, never
fully open, never fully shut off.

PASSION

A flower blooming in the hothouse of the heart,
A flower of strange odor and odd petals,
Beautiful while it blooms unplucked,
Hideous when snapped from its stem and carried away.

THE KISS OF DEATH

My host laughed loud, 'tis true, at his own joke,
But his wife smiled at me and I at her,
And he as usual failed to see. Just then
The cry of "Fire" was heard. My host ran to
The door. "Great God," he cried, "all hope is lost!"
And disappeared. I ran to where the window
Looked on the thread of street, eight stories down.
The flames burst forth from every crack. I rushed
Back to the hall. 'Twas choked with smoke. I locked
The door and turned. His wife lay on the couch.
"It's true," I cried. "There's not a chance for us!"
She smiled again with half-closed dreamy eyes
While beckoning with her jewelled hand to me.
And as the fire curled beneath the door,
Our lips met.

THE SUBURBAN FUNERAL

The crepe on the door, bleak faces at the window,
Sobs on the porch.

A slow moving coffin surrounded by blackly draped men
and women,

Jaded horses hitched to weather-beaten hacks,
A rickety hearse with drowsy driver.

A few children staring.

And above all the bright sun, the open sky.

And after it is over:

The leaving of relatives, some stern, some trying to cry.
The silent house.

The family huddled miserably in the sunshine on the
front steps.

The closed shutters.

The same bleak faces in the doorway.

A drama always to be remembered,

The sole happening of note, perhaps, in their dull lives,
A suburban funeral.

THE POET

I found a flower in the wastes laughing at the sun,
I plucked it from the dreary spot and set it near my
heart.

At first my friends admired it,
Spoke of its simple grace—
Yet when it withered not one would have it.
I threw it from me.

There it lay crumpled in the dust.
I left it and tried to banish its beauty from my soul.
I heard that a young poet found it there,
Stooped down, tenderly picked it up
And pressed it to his lips, dust and all.

OUT IN THE SHADOWS

I stood out in the darkness by the fence,
Listening to the organ within the closed church;
Listening alone,
Thinking of what I would never claim:
The quiet of a beautiful faith,
Nor to trust and love these churchly things;
Never to kiss the cross with passionate abandon;
Never to dream with blind faith;
Only to wait at the doorway, to pause and wonder....
How sharply did the low music bring it all to me.

THE RENT

We were passing.....
A thin little man stood in front of a fat old lady
Before an ancient house.
He was saying:
"You'll have to pay or I'll kick you out, you and your
whole damned family."

THE STILL ROOM

I was shown into the room with hushed voice,
The room where years before the woman killed her lover
With a hatchet and laughed into his brutal, dead face,
But I could see nothing strange in the room;
Only four walls, a small window, an iron bed,
A crucifix over the door and a tattered rug underfoot....
That is, I could see nothing strange at first.

When the door closed I smiled and stood wondering at
the window.

Nothing happened.

That was just it, nothing did.

Yet in a few moments I was glad to leave the place.
The silence reminded me too much of the silence in my
heart,

The deathlike silence after I had killed my own love.

I saw all too plainly.....

The mad woman laughing to herself.....

Before me rose the picture of another face idiotic with
sensuousness,

A face laughing over its dead love.....

I was glad to leave that still room.

MEN

Somehow I like the simple ways of men;
Their hearty handclasps and their idle conversation.
I like the swing of the universe in their manners,
Far better than the rich language and heavy ideas of
the intellectuals.

MY WORKS

Now am I permitted to sit in the market place,
To walk in the crowd, to touch men's hands,
To give them the fruits of my thought.
Fifty years hence I shall be as a clipped flower
Pressed between the leaves of the world,
Forgotten or unknown.

MOODS

To you restless ones I sing,
To you who constitute the crowd,
To all humanity.....
Here are the flowers I bring
And lay before you with a warm heart proud in longing
and a memory of pain,
O fruitless nights and hours of doubt
Spent in the search resulting in nothing
Ere the light of my love flickered and went out!

LIVING

Restless activity I love,
Always restless endeavor.
From the dawn of the day to the quiet of the night
Activity of body and mind.
Ceaseless love of the small things,
Endless effort, desires and uneasiness.....
Rather the burnt-out candle than one never lit.

MY INSPIRATION

It is as though I were wandering in some luxurious garden heavy with tropical flowers running wild over the walls.

So many are there I am unable to choose among them.
I pluck at random sprays of lilac, twigs blossoming like spring, roses red with the love of life.

I pluck them and arrange them in bouquets for the world.
And shall I be expected always to look for and throw away the weeds, too?

Are they not, in their own manner, beautiful and green?
And do they not grow in my garden?
All that grows is beautiful.

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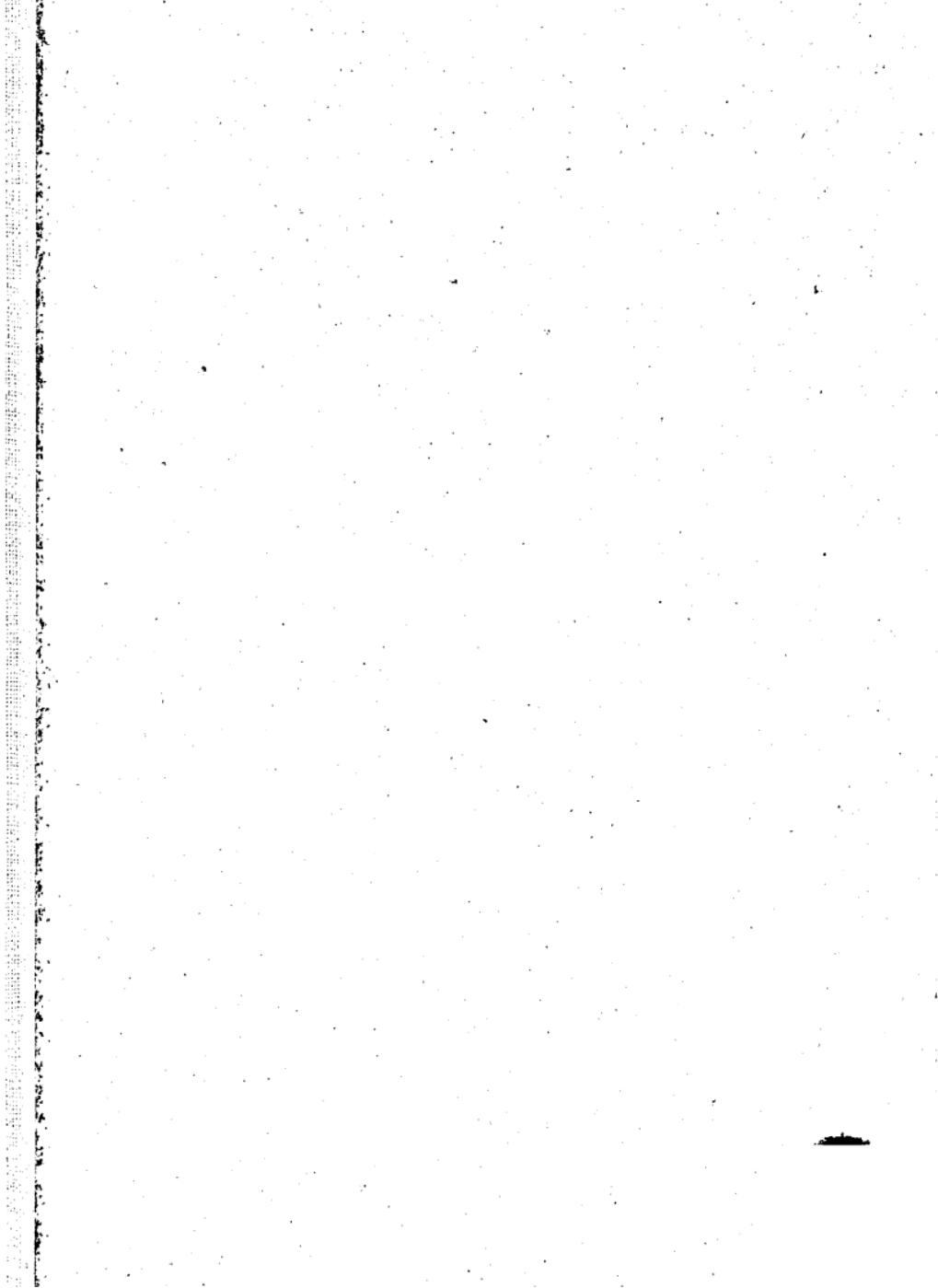
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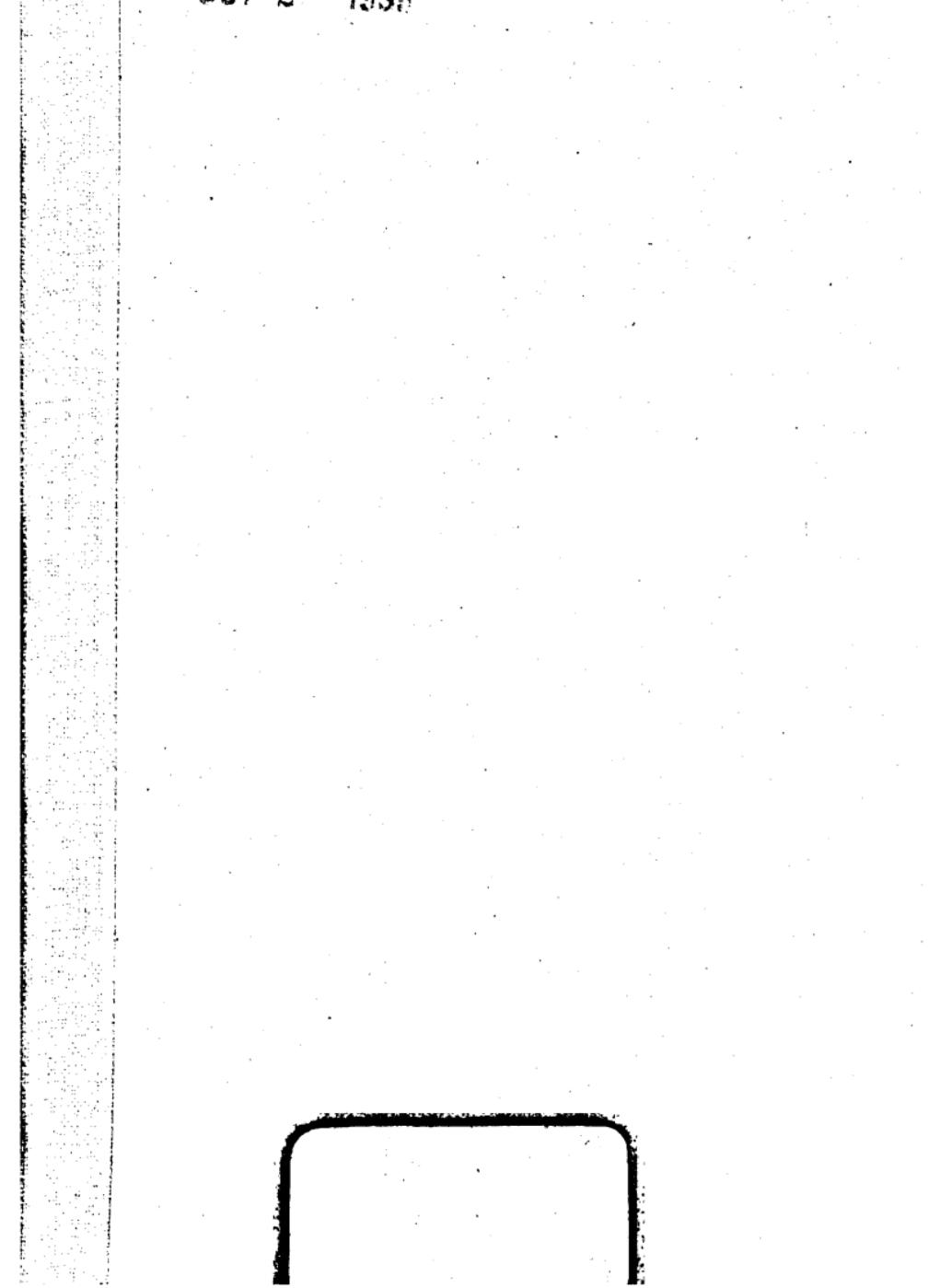
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